

TEST PIT EXCAVATION WITHIN CURRENTLY OCCUPIED RURAL SETTLEMENTS: RESULTS OF THE ENGLISH CORS PROJECT IN 2018

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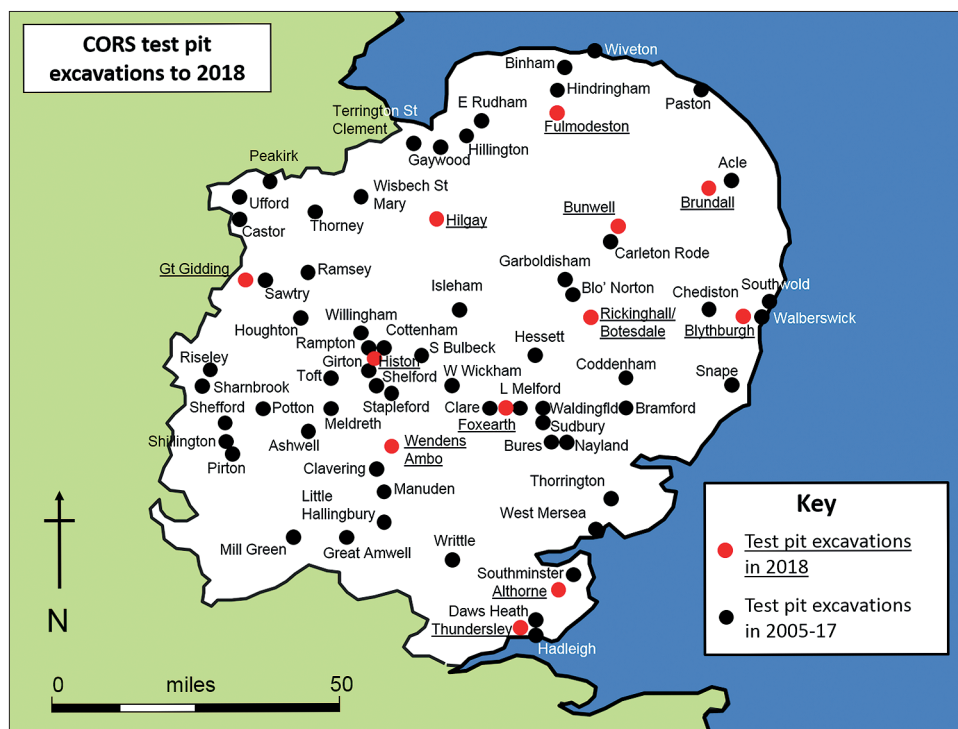


Figure 1 Map of Eastern England showing the locations of the CORS investigated by the HEFA project in East Anglia to 2018. Figure prepared by Carenza Lewis.

In 2018, 143 test pit excavations took place in a total of twelve rural communities (Fig. 1) in the final year of this long-running programme project carrying out standardised test pit excavations within more than 60 inhabited rural settlements of likely medieval date in order to illuminate their long-term development. In 2018, six of the excavated settlements (Althorne and Thundersley in Essex; Great Gidding in Cambridgeshire; and Bunwell, Fulmodeston and Hilgay in Norfolk) were new additions to the programme, while excavation in the other six settlements (Histon/Impington in Cambridgeshire; Foxearth and Wendens Ambo in Essex; Brundall in Norfolk; Blythburgh and Rickinghall with Botesdale in Suffolk) extended work previously reported in this journal.

The outcomes of the test pit excavations in 2018 are summarised below, listed alphabetically by county and parish name. In these brief summaries, ‘high medieval’ refers to the period spanning the early twelfth to early fourteenth centuries and ‘late medieval’ refers to the period spanning the late fourteenth to the mid-sixteenth centuries. Analysis focusses primarily on pottery because

this is widely found (thus acts as a proxy for human presence) and can be reliably dated cost-effectively. The summaries in this paper can be explored in more depth if read alongside maps available on the ACA website (<https://www.access.arch.cam.ac.uk/reports>) which show the distribution of pottery period by period for every settlement where test pit excavations have been carried as part of the English CORS project since 2005.

Cambridgeshire

Great Gidding, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 117831)

Great Gidding is located in western Cambridgeshire c. 15km south-west of Peterborough and 16km north-west of Huntingdon, on the north side of the Alconbury Brook which drains into the River Great Ouse at Huntingdon. The present small settlement comprises a cluster of properties east and south of the parish church, complemented by a regular linear row to the north arranged either side of Main Street leading out of the village north-east past Top Farm, and a less regular series of properties to the south-east along the triangular arrangement of Chapel End and Gains Lane. The settlement lies at an altitude ranging from 65m OD

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at Manor Farm in the north down to 40m OD south of the church nearest the Alconbury Brook.

Formerly in the historic county of Huntingdonshire, Gidding was first recorded in the Domesday Book (Ekwall 1940, 186) when the holding was divided between three major landowners (Williams and Martin 2003, 552, 555, 558; 560, 561). The earliest fabric of the existing parish church of St Michael dates to the mid-thirteenth century (Heritage Gateway CHER 00932) and the site of another lost church has been proposed near the main road (Heritage Gateway CHER 00945). There is evidence of formerly more extensive settlement which may be of medieval date in several places around the present village, including north of St Michael's Church (Heritage Gateway CHER 00934) and east of Chapel End, visible on Lidar surveys (<https://www.lidarfinder.com/>) while features of late Iron Age and Roman date have been excavated near Manor Farm (Heritage Gateway CB14660).

The first edition Ordnance Survey map shows the great majority of settlement at Great Gidding in the 1880s to be arranged as a linear row extending for c. 800m north along Main Street from the crossroads with Luddington Road, near to which Manor Farm is clearly named immediately south of the church. The settlement at Chapel End is much smaller and more dispersed in form, with fewer than a dozen properties loosely strung out along a triangular arrangement of lanes.

Nine test pits were excavated in Great Gidding in 2018 (Fig. 2), four in Chapel End and five along Main Street, with two of the latter in the area near the parish church. While it is difficult to draw conclusions from a small number of pits, some observations can be noted. The earliest pottery recovered dated to c. 850-1100 AD, found in GGI/18/06 and GGI/18/07, both located in Chapel End. A single small (3g) sherd of St Neots ware from GGI/18/06 would not normally be regarded as sufficient to indicate intensive activity such as habitation in the vicinity, but five sherds of the same date from GGI/18/07 can be considered very likely to do so, especially as these came from the lowest excavated context which contained no later material.

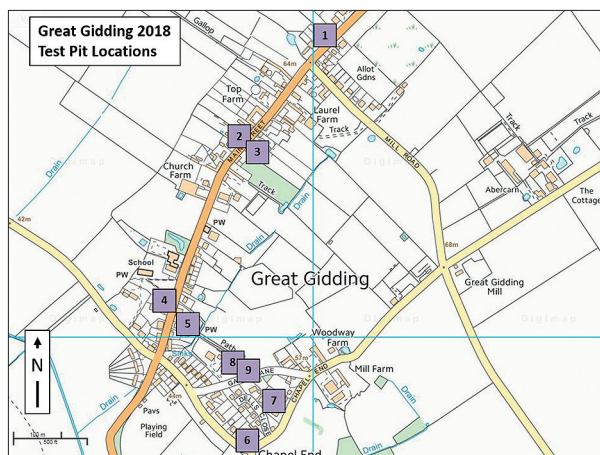


Figure 2 Great Gidding, Cambridgeshire, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

This same test pit (GGI/18/07) also produced the largest assemblage of pottery of high medieval date, including two large sherds from the lowest excavated context (50cm below the surface). Material of the same high medieval date from GGI/18/04, near the church, may possibly relate to settlement in this area by this time, as although this was restricted to a single find, this was a moderately large sherd from an undisturbed context in a pit that did not reach natural. The absence of pottery of this date from any of the pits in the north of the present village, all of which were excavated to natural, does hint at the possibility that this part of the village was a later development. Overall, it is possible to tentatively infer that the southern part of the Great Gidding was inhabited in the Saxo-Norman period, but with only one pit yielding more than a single sherd, it is not possible to say at present whether this settlement was very extensive.

Three pits produced pottery of later medieval date, but again in very small quantities. A single sherd from GGI/18/01 represents the earliest material from test pits in the north of the present settlement, but in such small quantities, this cannot be inferred to indicate settlement in this area. A notable change is evident in the distribution of pottery of post-medieval date, which is present in larger numbers from test pits at both ends of Main Street, with large sherds from GGI/18/02 and GGI/18/03 suggesting that this is likely to be the period when the northerly part of the settlement came into existence. In contrast, there is less material of this date from pits in Chapel End.

Histon and Impington, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 436639)

Ten test pits were excavated by school groups in Histon and Impington in 2018 followed by another 13 excavated by the local Histon and Impington Archaeology group (<https://hiarchaeology.wordpress.com/>), bringing the total since 2016 to 79 (Fig. 3). Most of the pits in 2018 targeted zones not explored in previous years, including the areas south of Histon Green and around Impington church.

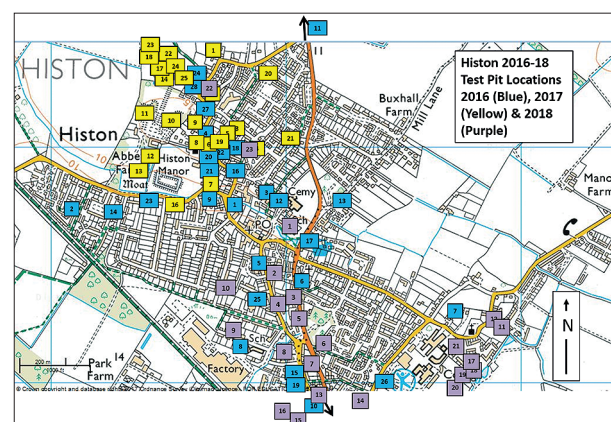


Figure 3 Histon and Impington, Cambridgeshire, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

In the centre of the present village (south of Histon Green), HIS/18/04 produced the first pottery of Iron Age date from test pit excavations, while three pits in the same area (HIS/18/02, 03 and 04) produced pottery of Roman date. The latter are close to HIS/16/06 which produced Romano-British pottery in 2016, strongly hinting at activity in this area in the Roman period. No additional finds of early Anglo-Saxon date were made found in 2018, but one pit c. 200m east of Histon parish church (HIS/18/23) produced a sizeable (19g) sherd of Ipswich ware. While this is too far (300m) from the only other recorded find of contemporary material in earlier years (HIS/17/23) to strongly suggest they derive from the same settlement, both do lie in, or adjacent to, areas where test pits produced material of early Anglo-Saxon date. Taken together, and given the difficulties of tightly dating the earlier pottery combined with the rarity with which early/middle Anglo-Saxon pottery is found in test pits, it does therefore seem reasonable to infer that HIS/18/23 represents an eastward continuation of a 400m spread of activity north of the parish church.

Turning to the later Anglo-Saxon period, five test pits produced pottery of this date in 2018, including two near Impington parish church. The latter are not far from HIS/16/07, the only test pit previously dug in Impington, which also produced late Anglo-Saxon pottery, thus it now seems reasonable to infer that there was a settlement in this area at this time, although the small amount of pottery recovered east and south of the church suggests this may not have been very large.

For the high medieval period, most of the pits south of Histon Green produced pottery in sufficient quantities to indicate habitation in this area, which now seems likely to have extended at least as far south as the present school. The pattern near Impington parish church was, somewhat counter-intuitively, more mixed, with only three of the seven pits in this area producing pottery of high medieval date, suggesting settlement remained restricted to the area north and west of the church. In the late medieval period, the area of settlement south of Histon Green appears to have been particularly severely affected by contraction, with the number of test pits containing pottery dropping from 8/8 to 3/8. Settlement west of Impington parish church also appears to be reduced, although east of the church the number of sites with pottery increases (although the number of sherds declines). Both areas appear to recover in the post-medieval period.

Essex

Althorne, Essex (NGR TQ 910988)

Althorne is located in south-east Essex, 22km southeast of Chelmsford and 4.5km northwest of Burnham-on-Crouch, on the south side of the Dengie peninsula overlooking the River Crouch. It is now a small village in which most housing lies either side of two roads, Fambridge Road and Burnham Road/Summerhill which meet at a T-junction c. 200m south-east of the parish church. There are however a large number of other houses and farms dispersed across the parish, which ranges in altitude from 20-45m OD, with the present village of Althorne located on a locally prominent hill.

The name of Althorne, which was not recorded in Domesday Book, was first documented in 1198 (Reaney 1935, 208) while three of the outlying farms (Stokes Hall, Smith's Farm and Andrews Farm) bear names recorded in the fourteenth century. The earliest fabric of the parish church of St Andrew dates to the late fourteenth century (Heritage Gateway EHER 11238 & 38497) while Stokes Hall is thought to be the site of a thirteenth century moated site (Heritage Gateway EHER 40698). The presence of a deserted medieval settlement has been tentatively recorded 'near' the church (Heritage Gateway EHER 11240). In the nineteenth century the settlement was very much smaller than today and almost entirely dispersed, with the church isolated west of an intermittent string of farms along Fambridge Road, some distance from the nearest of a scatter of farms including those named in the fourteenth century, south-east of the church.

In 2018 a total of seven test pits were excavated in gardens and paddocks along Summerhill, Burnham Road and Fambridge Road (Fig. 4). Activity in the prehistoric period was indicated by the discovery of worked flints, burnt stone or both from all the test pits bar one (ALT/18/04), complemented by a single large sherd of Late Bronze Age pottery from (ALT/18/06). This same pit also produced two sherds of Romano-British pottery including one sizeable sherd (14g) from an undisturbed context 50cm below the surface. Two other pits (ALT/18/01 and 07) each produced single sherds of Romano-British pottery. While these low sherd numbers are insufficient to infer settlement nearby with any confidence, it does seem likely that there was activity of some sort in this period which may have been more focussed on the higher ground west of the later church.

No pottery of Anglo-Saxon date was found from any of the test pits in 2018, reflecting the pattern in earlier years, when pottery of this date has been very infrequently found in Essex. For the high medieval period, three test pits each produced just a single small sherd of pottery. Two of these (ALT/18/03 and 04) were

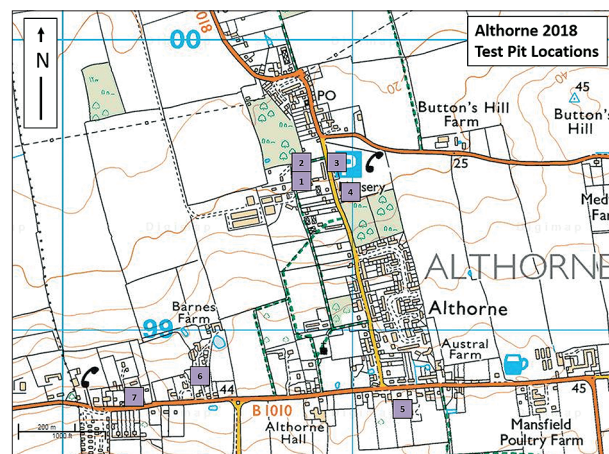


Figure 4 Althorne, Essex, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

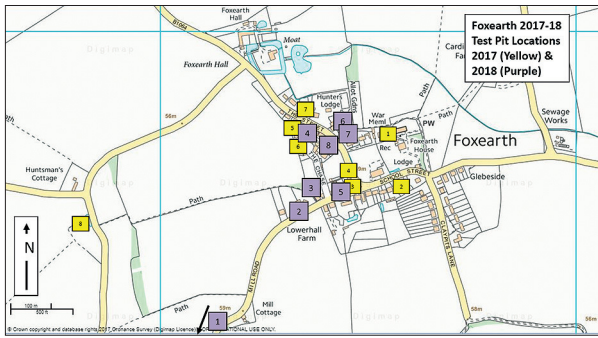


Figure 5 Foxearth, Essex, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

located close together east of the Summerhill/Burham Road in an area now used as a recreation ground. They are likely to indicate non-intensive use such as manuring of arable rather than habitation. The 'Summerhill' name hints at the possibility of seasonal use of this area in the medieval period, although the name does not appear to be recorded before the early modern period (Reaney 1935, 208). No pottery of late medieval date was found from any of the 2018 test pits, and only one (ALT/18/06) produced any post-medieval pottery, yielding a small assemblage of just three sherds.

Foxearth, Essex (NGR TL 834446)

Eight test pits were excavated in Foxearth in 2018, bringing the total since 2017 to 16 (Fig. 5). One pit (FOX/18/06) yielded a single tiny sherd (1g) of Romano-British pottery, located c. 100m west of FOX/17/01 which produced two sherds of the same date immediately west of the church in 2017. The close proximity of these is possibly noteworthy, although such a small single sherd would conventionally be considered unlikely to indicate activity more intensive than arable manuring.

No pottery of Anglo-Saxon date was recovered in 2018, and while three test pits (FOX/18/02, FOX/18/05 and FOX/18/06) revealed pottery dating to the high medieval period, none produced more than a single sherd, which would not usually be regarded as sufficient to infer intensive use such as habitation in the vicinity. From the 16 pits excavated to date in Foxearth, only three have produced more than a single sherd of high medieval date and only one (closest to the moated site at Foxearth Hall) has produced more than four. The large proportion of test pits producing only single sherds of this date, particularly east of The Street, hints at the possibility that the area nearest the church may have been in non-intensive use, perhaps as manured arable, rather than used for habitation at this time. It is tempting to speculate that settlement in the high medieval period may have been focussed around Foxearth Hall, although further investigation would be needed to test this hypothesis.

Only one test pit produced pottery of later medieval date in 2018 (FOX/18/05), again, just a single sherd. For the post-medieval period there is a slight increase in

the number of test pits yielding pottery, but again sherd numbers are low. However, it can be noted that this is the first period for which pottery was found in test pits located in outlying farms beyond the present village.

Thundersley, Essex (NGR TQ 782887)

Thundersley is located in south Essex between Basildon and Southend-on-Sea, on gently rising ground between 30 and 60m OD. The centre of the settlement (if defined as such by the parish church) occupies a wooded area within which the church is quite isolated, but the surrounding area is now very built up, with Thundersley forming part of a ribbon of development along the A13 which extends uninterrupted for nearly 30km from Basildon to Southend. This includes Hadleigh c. 3.5km to the south-east where test pit excavations were carried out in 2015/17 (Lewis 2016a, 56; 2017, 73; 2018, 78) and laps around Daws Heath, 3km to the east, where test pit excavations were carried out in 2013–15 (Lewis 2014, 73; 2015, 42–3; 2016a, 55–6).

Thundersley's name is first documented in Domesday Book (Reaney 1935, 172), while a handful of nearby farms (none within 900m of Thundersley parish church) are associated with names recorded in the thirteenth – early sixteenth century (Reaney 1935, 172–3) and/or have sixteenth – seventeenth century fabric. These include Burches (identified as one of two medieval manors at Thundersley), c. 900m to the north, whose present structure dates to the seventeenth century or earlier (Listed Building Entry 1170105). The earliest fabric of the parish church of St Peter dates to c. 1200 (Listed Building Entry 1170125).

The earliest Ordnance Survey maps show a completely different landscape predating the extensive twentieth century development of the settlement. The church is isolated (apart from the adjacent rectory) within a largely unwooded landscape thinly punctuated by a few isolated farms, including Jarvis Hall, whose fabric dates to c. 1400 (Listed Building Entry 1170164), and Thundersley Lodge which is of sixteenth century or earlier date (Listed Building Entry 1123663). 700m east of the church there is a handful of cottages along the edge of a small green, and 400m further east again there begins a 500m-long interrupted row of houses leading to point where five lanes meet on a common: it is this place which is named Thundersley in the 1870s.

In 2018 a total of 16 test pits (Fig. 6) were excavated by AGES Archaeological and Historical Association (<http://ages-aha.co.uk/>) community group and students from Southend High School for Boys. Most test pits were located within c. 250m of the church, but six were excavated much further away, 600m–1200m to the south and east of the church. Two pits (THU/19/11 and 16), both located close together south of the church, produced a total of 20 sherds of Bronze Age pottery, a very unusually high number which can be confidently inferred to indicate intensive activity such as settlement or funerary activity nearby. The same area also produced a significant concentration of Romano-British pottery, with four of the six pits south of the church (THU/18/11, 13, 15 and 16) producing a total of 23 sherds of this date. 15 of these came from THU/18/11, suggesting this may have been the centre of an area of intensive activity

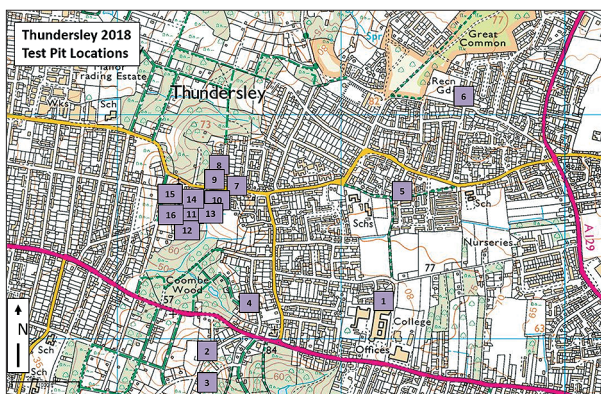


Figure 6 Thundersley, Essex, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

such as settlement, although smaller assemblages from surrounding pits hint at the possibility that this was not very large in extent. Two tiny sherds (1g each) of Romano-British pottery from THU/18/01, 1700m to the south east of the church, are less likely to indicate settlement.

No Anglo-Saxon material was identified from any of the test pits, and only one produced pottery of high medieval date, a single tiny (1g) sherd from THU/18/14. The location of this test pit near the church makes it tempting to infer the presence of settlement contemporary with the church fabric adjacent to the building, but as this is the only sherd of this date from ten test pits excavated around the church, it seems more likely that there was minimal habitative activity here in this period. The late medieval period was also evidenced by just a single sherd, although this was somewhat larger (10g) and from an undisturbed context 50cm below the surface. Found in THU/18/01, near to the site of Thundersley Lodge, is plausible that this derives from activity, perhaps habitation, associated with the building through to be of sixteenth-century or earlier date.

Post-medieval pottery was also recovered from the Thundersley Lodge test pit (THU/18/01), although this assemblage was limited to two sherds. Four of the ten pits near the church also produced pottery of this date. Although only one of these (THU/18/15) produced more than five sherds, it does seem plausible that this represents the first period since Roman when the area near the church was used for habitation.

Wendens Ambo, Essex (NGR TL 512363)

25 test pits were excavated in Wendens Ambo in 2018, bringing the total over two years to 36 (Fig. 7), thus considerably increasing coverage across this small settlement. Areas investigated for the first time in 2018 included zones near the parish church and 200m to its west around Westbury Farm, while new pits were also excavated further south down Duck Lane, east of the centre of the present village, near the railway line and along Mill Road.

2018 saw the first finds of prehistoric pottery from the test pits: a total of three sherds of Bronze Age pottery were recorded from WAM/18/07, WAM/18/16 and WAM/18/17, with a sherd of Iron Age pot also present in WAM/18/16. These test pits were all close to the known area of later prehistoric settlement and Roman villa along Chinnel Lane, west of the present village. Three of the test pits which produced Romano-British pottery (WAM/18/08, 16 and 17) were in the same area, while three sherds from WAM/18/01 near Westbury Farm may represent a separate focus of activity north of the brook.

As in 2017, no material of early or middle Anglo-Saxon date was found in 2018, but one test pit produced a single sherd of late Anglo-Saxon (St Neots ware) pottery (WAM/18/24), near Westbury Barn, immediately north of the brook. This lies close to the only other test pit which produced late Anglo-Saxon pottery in 2017. While each of these pits produced only a single sherd, not enough to confidently infer settlement nearby, their proximity to one another does invite the tentative inference that this area may represent an early node of activity of some sort immediately north of the brook.

Seven test pits produced pottery of high medieval date in 2018, although only WAM/18/24 (again) and WAM/18/17 yielded sherds in sufficient numbers to confidently infer the presence of settlement nearby, with WAM/18/24 (near the brook but outside the present village footprint) producing a substantial assemblage of 13 sherds, most from undisturbed contexts containing no later material. Overall, the distribution shows a very clear pattern, with all of the test pits which produced high medieval pottery located along the west side of Duck Street or around Westbury Barn. In total, ten of the 16 pits in this area produced some pottery of this date, although only six yielded more than a single sherd. None of the six pits around the parish church produced any pottery of this date, while a single tiny sherd from WAM/18/25 may be inferred to derive from low-intensity activity such as arable manuring.

A marked change is apparent in the distribution of pottery dating to the late medieval period, which was found in five pits in 2018. Overall, pottery of this date concentrates in three discrete locations: south of the brook along Duck Lane, around Westbury Barn and (for the first time) near the church. In contrast to the somewhat nucleated settlement hinted at by the high medieval pottery distribution, the later medieval settlement seems to have been much more dispersed,

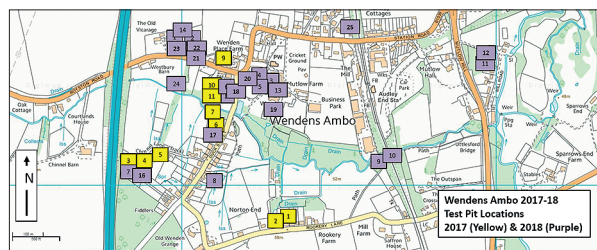


Figure 7 Wendens Ambo, Essex, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

perhaps comprising a series of isolated farmsteads. The area near the brook (including WAM/18/24) appears to have been unoccupied in this period.

The pattern appears to change again in the post-medieval period – ten pits produced pottery of this date in 2018, eight of which lay along or near Royston Road. Overall the distribution of pottery indicates that Wendens Ambo at this time was predominantly arranged as a row settlement along Royston Road, possibly complemented by some habitation in Norton End, indicated by finds in 2017.

Norfolk

Brundall, Norfolk (NGR TG 325084)

Five test pits were excavated in Brundall in 2018, bringing the total to 46 (Fig. 8). Only one pit (BRU/18/05) produced pottery of high medieval date, a single small sherd (4g) from a pit which was excavated to natural. As in 2017, no pottery of late medieval date was found in any of the pits excavated in 2018. Three adjacent pits produced post-medieval pottery, but only five sherds, all small, were found in total, making it unlikely that this indicates settlement nearby, although habitation may more reasonably be inferred from the larger assemblage of six sherds from BRU/18/01 on the north-eastern edge of the present village.

Bunwell, Norfolk (NGR TM 118937)

Bunwell is located in south Norfolk, 18km (11 miles) southwest of Norwich. The settlement lies between c. 52–70m OD spanning the watershed between streams draining south into the River Tas and north into the River Tiffey, both of which ultimately drain into the River Yare at Norwich. Bunwell today includes a 1.5km long linear settlement named Great Green which is arranged either side of Bunwell Street, with a much smaller hamlet named Little Green to its south-east. The parish church, located c. 500m south of Little Green, has just a few properties nearby.

The name of Bunwell is first recorded in 1198 (Ekwall 1940, 70). Large numbers of finds of prehistoric, Roman and medieval date have been made across the parish, including a skeleton thought to be of Anglo-Saxon or medieval date near the parish church of St Michael (Heritage Gateway NHER 10027). The earliest fabric of

the church, however, dates to the later fifteenth century (Heritage Gateway NHER 10040). The parish contains many domestic houses of seventeenth century date, including several in Great Green including Old Rectory Farmhouse (Listed Building Entry 1373608) and nearby Manor Hotel which is of sixteenth century date (Listed Building Entry 1049613), both located along Rectory Lane.

The first edition Ordnance Survey map shows the main settlement in the parish in the nineteenth century to have comprised two discrete named places, Bunwell Street on the north-west and Great Green to its south-east, where there are hints of a large triangular green. The gap between Great Green and Little Green was longer than today. Notably, it is the place near the church which is named Bunwell, although there were then just three properties there in addition to the church, one of which was a school.

Ten test pits were excavated in Bunwell in 2018 (Fig. 9), eight in the central part of Great Green (four along Rectory Lane near Old Rectory Farmhouse) with two other sited next to St Michael's church. No material of prehistoric, Roman or Anglo-Saxon date was found from any of the pits, while material of high medieval date was limited to a single tiny (1g) sherd from BUN/18/08 at the north end of Rectory Lane. This is unlikely to indicate settlement in the vicinity, and the absence of pottery of this date from any of the pits in the Rectory Lane area (all of which reached natural) suggests that this area was in non-intensive use at this time, perhaps as manured arable. Four test pits produced pottery of late medieval date, all from pits on or near to Rectory Lane (BUN/18/04, 05, 07 and 09), but none produced more than two sherds, so while the clustering of these pits makes it tempting to infer the origins of settlement in this area at this time, the evidence for intensive activity is not very compelling.

The post-medieval period sees a marked transformation, with all pits producing pottery of this date. Three of the pits along Rectory Lane produced more than five sherds, with BUN/18/09 producing a high

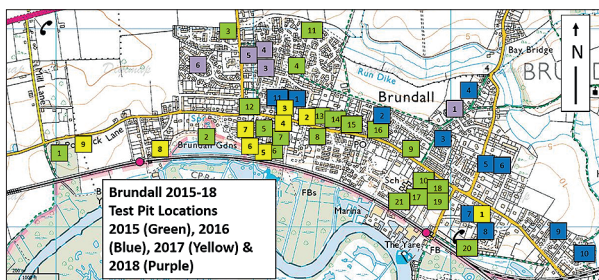


Figure 8 Brundall, Norfolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

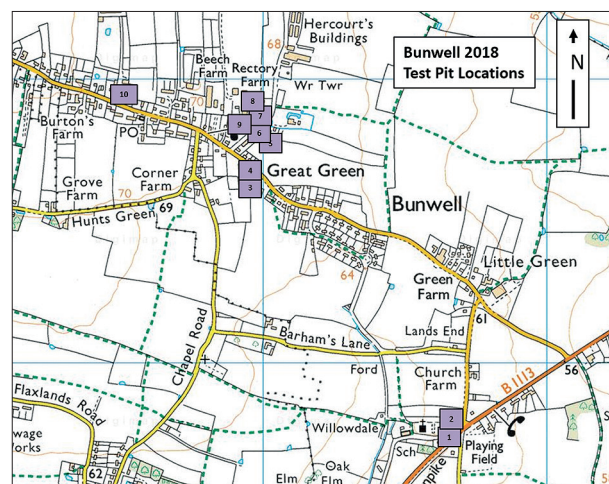


Figure 9 Bunwell, Norfolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

proportion of non-local table wares including Cologne stoneware, English stoneware, Staffordshire white salt-glazed stoneware and creamware, suggesting this may have been a more affluent part of the village at this time. A similar pattern was apparent in the test pits near the church, with BUN/18/02 in particular producing an assemblage of 25 sherds, eleven of which were non-local table wares.

Fulmodeston, Norfolk (NGR TF 993309)

Fulmodeston is a large parish in north Norfolk, situated c. 7km east of Fakenham, 33km north-west of Norwich and c. 38km north east of King's Lynn. The village lies at around 60m OD on gently undulating land south of the river Stiffkey which runs north-west from Fulmodeston towards the north Norfolk coast. The settlement of Fulmodeston today is a small one, with fewer than 50 houses sited along four lanes which meet at a crossroads complemented by a handful of other houses c. 600m to the south at Hall Farm, which are themselves some 300m from the disused former parish church which is now in ruins. 300m and 900m further south (respectively) are a moated site and Manor Farm, while to the west lies the tiny hamlet of Croxton and single isolated farms of Clipstone and Lower Clipstone.

The name Fulmodeston is first recorded in Domesday Book which, unusually, includes the church in the entry (Williams and Martin 1992, 1094). The earliest fabric of the medieval parish church of St Mary dates to c. 1300 (Listed Building Entry 1304572) while that of St John the Baptist in Croxton (also now disused and ruinous) dates to at least the late thirteenth century (Listed Building Entry 1373784) and possibly as early as the eleventh or twelfth century (Heritage Gateway NHER 1083). The present parish church of Christ Church, located at Fulmodeston crossroads, was built in 1882 to replace these two former churches (Listed Building Entry 1049246). Pottery of Roman, Anglo-Saxon and medieval date has been found widely across the parish and DMVs are recorded at Clipstone (HER 2171) and at Fulmodeston between St Marys and Common End (Heritage Gateway NHER 2173).

Early Ordnance Survey maps show settlement in the nineteenth century to be arranged broadly the same as today, although there appears to be a few more cottages strung out along Pedlars Lane in Common End, east of the ruined parish church and southeast of the village at the crossroads.

Eleven test pits were excavated in Fulmodeston in 2018, one of which was located in the hamlet of Croxton with the other ten all in the settlement around the crossroads (Fig. 10). No material of prehistoric, Roman or Anglo-Saxon date was found from any of the pits, while material of high medieval date was limited to the test pit in Croxton (FUL/18/11), which was sited within a U-shaped pond identified as a possible moat (HER 2180) c. 30m from the church of St John. The recovery of four sherds from undisturbed contexts within this pit, which was not excavated to natural, strengthens the case for this feature being of medieval date. No late medieval pottery was recovered from this pit, with the only material of this date from any of the test pits in Fulmodeston coming from FUL/18/10 at the westernmost end of the present

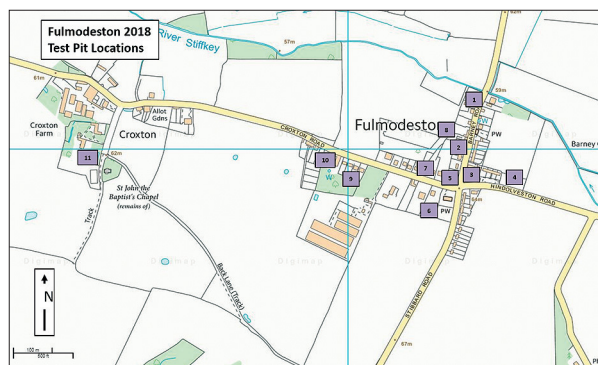


Figure 10 Fulmodeston, Norfolk showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

settlement. There was no other evidence for activity around the crossroads at this time.

The picture changes markedly in the post-medieval period, for which pottery was recovered from all bar one test pit (FUL/18/04, on the easternmost margin of the village), with the largest assemblage of nineteen sherds from FUL/18/10. Throughout all the pits, the post medieval assemblages were dominated by glazed red earthen wares, the only exception being a single sherd of German stoneware from FUL/18/10.

Hilgay, Norfolk (NGR TL 621984)

Hilgay is located in west Norfolk c. 5km south of Downham Market, c. 21km south of King's Lynn and 28km north-west of Thetford. The village lies on level land at c. 10m OD immediately east of the Fordham Fen and Great West Fen and immediately south of the River Wissey which runs west to drain into the wash at King's Lynn via the River Great Ouse. The village today is a nucleated settlement focused around a quadrilateral arrangement of streets (High Street, East End, Church Road and Woodhill Road) north of the presently somewhat isolated church, and along a main north-south-orientated axis extending for c. 1km comprising Bridge Street (nearest the river), High Street and Ely Road (which runs south out of the village). There is a large area of settlement south-west of the High Street accessed via West End and Tower Road.

The name Hilgay is first recorded in a charter of 974 AD (Ekwall 1940, 228) with the *-ay* element derived from Old English 'island'. Holdings under the name Hilgay are divided between seven entries in Domesday Book (Williams and Martin 1992, 1071, 1087, 1112, 1126, 1130, 1133, 1180). Earthworks of a moated site and associated earthworks (NHER 4454) just outside the present settlement 270m north-east of Millers Farm are thought to be associated with one of three medieval manors held by Ramsey Abbey, presumably Massingham/Curteys, as Modenev Priory (Heritage Gateway NHER 4459) was in the southwest of the parish (Listed Building Entry 1020345) and the extant late sixteenth century house at Wood Hall lies 800m south of the church (Listed Building Entry 1077724).

The earliest fabric of the parish church of All Saints dates to the early thirteenth century (Listed Building Entry 1077719). A large number of prehistoric and Roman finds have been made across the parish which was included in the Fenland Survey (Silvester 1991). An early Anglo-Saxon cemetery (Heritage Gateway NHER 17797) and a settlement of ninth- to thirteenth-century date (Heritage Gateway NHER 13903) were discovered by metal detecting and field-walking in the parish.

Early Ordnance Survey maps show the settlement in the nineteenth century to have been smaller and more linear in form, mostly arranged either side of Bridge Street/High Street and extending for just c. 400m south of the River Wissey. To the east, there is a small cluster of houses at either end of Church Road, at the junctions with East End (to the north) and Woodhill Road (to the south). Approximately 160m south of the village c. 100m west of the church, there is a discrete small area of settlement named The Pits along the east side of Ely Road.

Nine test pits were excavated in Hilgay in 2018 (Fig. 11). HGY/18/07 produced a single sherd of late Bronze Age pottery while two pits (HGY/18/10 and 02), both located in the same garden 20m apart, produced a total of three sherds of Romano-British pottery. The two Romano-British sherds from HGY/18/02 together weighed 17g and were recovered from a largely undisturbed context 40cm below the surface, and may indicate intact deposits of this date in the vicinity which could very tentatively be inferred to relate to intensive activity such as settlement. No pottery of Anglo-Saxon date was recovered from any of the test pits excavated in 2018.

Three test pits (HGY/18/01, 03, and 05) produced pottery dating to the high medieval period, but only HGY/18/01 (on the east of the present village south of Millers Farm) yielded more than a single sherd, and even this assemblage only amounted to two sherds totalling 5g in weight.

No pottery of late medieval date was recovered from any of the test pits, but all produced material of post-medieval date. While it is difficult to make reliable observations from such a small number of excavated pits, it is interesting to note that HGY/18/01 produced an

assemblage of sixteen sherds including non-local Delft Ware and Staffordshire White Salt-Glazed Stoneware table wares, while HGY/18/05 and HGY/18/06 east of West End lane produced smaller assemblages dominated by more utilitarian red earthen wares. Less pottery of this date was found from pits near the church and along Church Road.

Suffolk

Blythburgh, Suffolk (NGR TM 452752)

Twelve test pits were excavated at Blythburgh in 2018 with eleven more excavated in May 2019, bringing the total since 2017 to 36 (Fig. 12). As in 2017, no pottery of prehistoric, Roman or early Anglo-Saxon date was found in any of the pits excavated in 2018. However, four pits (BLY/18/08, BLY/18/09, BLY/18/11 and BLY/19/09) each produced a single sherd of middle Anglo-Saxon Ipswich ware while BLY/19/03 yielded two. Three of these (BLY/18/08, BLY/18/09 and BLY/19/09) lie close together either side of Station Road as it proceeds north out of the present village, and (given the rarity of material of this date) the pottery from these can reasonably be inferred to indicate the likelihood of settlement in the vicinity. BLY/19/03 was nearly 200m to the south-west and may indicate a separate node of activity south of the present church. The sizeable 61g sherd from BLY/18/11 is more puzzling as this test pit was sited on the flood plain: it is thus possible the pottery derives from activity related to trade/exchange rather than settlement, with settlement more likely to be on the slightly higher ground along Station Road.

Five pits produced pottery of late Anglo-Saxon date in 2018/19, all bar one (BLY/19/01) in the north of the present village along Station Road, in the same area as the Ipswich ware, suggesting that the activity in this area continued from the eighth century into at least the ninth or tenth. This is broadly contemporary with the burials of eighth and tenth century date found a little to the west, within the priory precinct boundary in 2008 (Wessex Archaeology 2009; Lewis 2018).

The test pit data show a considerable expansion in the spatial extent of activity in the high medieval

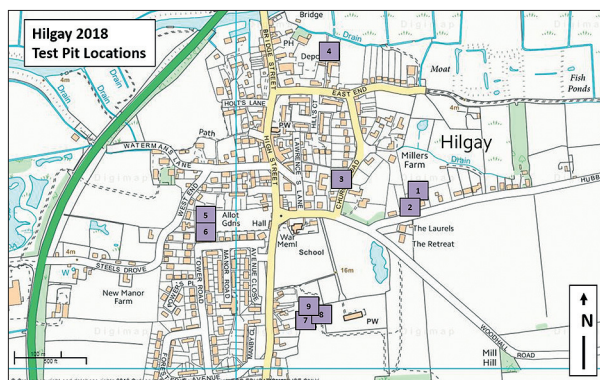


Figure 11 Hilgay, Norfolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

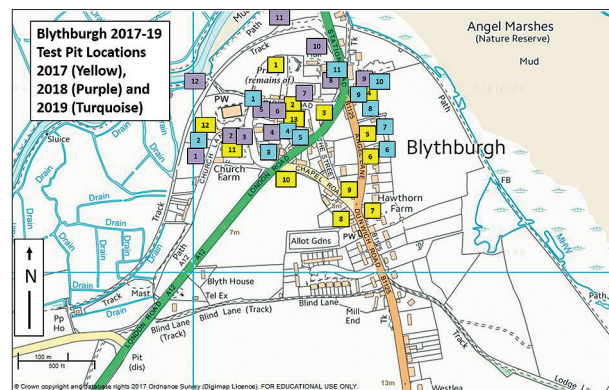


Figure 12 Blythburgh Suffolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

period, encompassing the documented date of the priory foundation c. AD 1125. Sixteen test pits produced pottery of this date in 2018 and 2019, most located in the area nearest the church north of London Road. Overall, test pits in this area generally produced large numbers of sherds, but some of the largest assemblages of all came from pits further from the church, at the junction between London Road and Station Road (BLY/18/08 and BLY/18/09). In the late medieval period, there is no sign of the contraction seen so frequently (Lewis 2016), and indeed the number of pits yielding potentially habitative numbers of sherds rises, with the area south of the present village notably appearing to come into more intensive use at this time. All pits produced pottery of post-medieval date, although pits nearer the river yielded less of this material suggesting the settlement was then focussing more firmly on the roads than the waterway.

Rickingham and Botesdale, Suffolk (NGR TM 044755)

Eight test pits were excavated in Rickingham and Botesdale in 2018, bringing the total since 2017 to 14 (Fig. 13). Test pits in 2018 were sited to fill gaps between sites excavated in 2017 and extend further north-east and south-west. Drawing inferences is difficult with a relatively small number of pits excavated, but it can be noted that while no pottery of prehistoric, Roman or Anglo-Saxon date was identified in 2018, six pits produced material of high medieval date. Most notably, RAB/18/04, east of Cherry Tree Lane, yielded an extremely large assemblage of more than 90 sherds including more than 70 recovered from undisturbed contexts 70-90cm below the surface. This pit however produced no pottery of late medieval date, with pits producing material of this date located, possibly intermittently, along The Street.

As in 2017, all test pits in 2018 produced post-medieval pottery, but most yielded larger assemblages than in 2018, suggesting the settlement was expanding at this time. The assemblages are mostly dominated by utilitarian red earthen wares rather than non-local table wares.

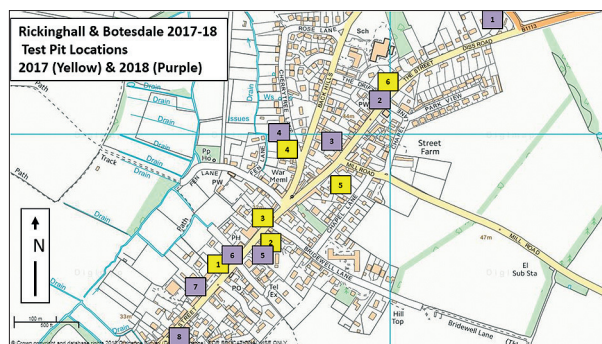


Figure 13 Rickingham and Botesdale, Suffolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

Conclusion

The 143 test pits excavated in 2018 brought to 2,511 the total number of test pits excavated since 2005 in currently occupied rural settlements in England under the auspices of the universities of Cambridge and Lincoln, with the aims of contributing to research into medieval settlement development while also achieving wider social goals through public engagement. This programme of publicly engaged research ended in 2018.

Throughout the period of this research programme, interim summaries of the results from each parish have been published each year in *Medieval Settlement Research* and online (Lewis 2005; 2006; 2007b; 2008; 2009; 2011; 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016a; 2017; 2018) while maps showing the test pit sites and pottery reports have been made available to view immediately online at www.access.arch.cam.ac.uk/reports. A full archive report detailing work in each settlement, with introduction, discussion and conclusions, has been completed after test pit excavation ceases in each settlement and submitted to the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) where they can be accessed online (<https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/>). The aims and outcomes of the test pit excavations have been presented widely at academic conferences and to local communities, while occasional research papers have been published on specific aspects of the results, exploring both the archaeology (Lewis 2007a; 2010; 2015b; 2016b; forthcoming 2019a; forthcoming 2019b; forthcoming 2019c) and the social outcomes (Lewis 2014c; 2016c). An overview of the archaeological outcomes will be submitted to the next issue of *Medieval Settlement Research*, while work will now begin on synthesising the full results of this large-scale programme of investigation for monograph publication.

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